THE

ORDEAL.

N°. 26.] SATURDAY, JULY 1, 1809. [Vol. 1.

RETROSPECTIVE ADDRESS.

"That all these papers are happily imagined, or accurately polished, that the same sentiments have not sometimes recurred, or the same expressions been too frequently repeated, I have not confidence in my abilities sufficient to warrant. He that condemns himself to compose on a stated day, will often bring to his task an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, an imagination overwhelmed, a mind distracted with anxieties, a body languishing with disease: he will labour on a barren topick till it is too late to change it; or in the ardour of invention, diffuse his thoughts into wild exuberance, which the pressing hour of publication cannot suffer judgment to examine or reduce."—*Johnson.*

THE present number of the Ordeal will complete one volume of a work, which the editors are confident to hope has been conducted in strict conformity to the principles upon which it was originally projected. As it is the present intention of the editors to discontinue the publication, custom obliges them to announce that intention with a certain degree of formality, though it will not follow that the publick will derive any peculiar interest in the disclosure. On the contrary, as the world received the annunciation of the work with frigid indifference, the editors will not be disappointed if they should dismiss it with undisturbed tranquillity. It is fortunate that the editors have never flattered themselves with the idea of being able to render the Ordeal a favourite publication; the meteorick flashes of wit and merriment were too transient to shed permanent effulgence upon their pages; and the lighter graces, which skim over the surface of literature, were too fragile to afford strength to the arm of satire, or vigour to political illustrations. Their aim was only to be useful, to establish a publication which might aspire to more dignity of discussion than is to be discovered in the common newspapers of the day, and at the same time to become the most eligible vehicle for the communication of literary and political pro-

ductions. It is not remarkable that an experiment should fail of the success anticipated by the projectors, and this day, will therefore, terminate the existence of the Ordeal. But the editors have frequently experienced flattering encouragement, in words, and they have not been entirely destitute of the support of munificent generosity.

The acknowledgments which they are obliged to make for extraneous assistance are few in number. The review of Mr. Buckminster's sermon in the seventh number, the burlesque ode in the twelfth, and the Review of Mr. Carey's sermon in the fourteenth and fifteenth, are the principal communications for which they are under obligations to different correspondents. There are other matters however, of minor consideration, which might be referred to other names than those of the editors, which it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to enumerate ; and ineligible, perhaps indelicate, to disclose.

It is peculiarly the pride of the editors to reflect, that their work has been conducted almost without assistance. It has generally been the production of individual effort, and laborious application ; and therefore, they cannot but deprecate the lash of critical severity. But if the principles which they have espoused are firm, and the conclusions which they have adopted are true, the editors will not querulously complain if their language and style should be captiously derided. If the trunk be sound at the heart, it will do no harm to the tree to suppress the shoots of adventitious luxuriance.

The state of the commercial and political relations of the United States, when this publication was first commenced, was so desperate, that every friend of the country hung down his head in despair. The turpitude of Mr. Jefferson was every day becoming more evident ; and a ruinous embargo, like a wasting sickness, consumed the property of the publick, in a proportion infinitely greater than the nominal amount. These two subjects then it became most important to discuss ; and the review of Mr. Giles's speech on the embargo laws in our former numbers, and the Letters of Marcus Brutus, were composed in conformity to such intentions. There is a virulence of political invective supposed to exist in these few letters, which is not authorized by the facts on which the philippicks are founded. Those who assert that every political transaction in this country should have

its *measured share* of approbation or of censure applied to it, that just so much and no more than it intrinsically deserves, should be the quantity of either which is bestowed, know nothing of the state of politicks in the United States; and those who imagine that mere reasoning and solid argument are calculated to convince men in a republican government, of the truth or errour of opinions, know nothing of human nature. The liberty of the press would be useless unless great latitude of political investigation be allowed; where a whole assembly is constantly brawling, he must have the lungs of a Stentor, who expects to be heard distinctly amidst the tumult. It is salutary to the community that such ardent investigation should be encouraged; otherswise the natural sensibility of rules to the opinions of the people, would grow callous to the touch of luke warm censurers. For example, to the spirit which was excited last winter in the northern states, but particularly in Massachusetts, may we attribute the sudden deviation from the course of policy which the then administration were pursuing, and which if it had been much longer followed would have made a wreck of the honour, the hopes, and the prosperity of the country.

Now, if the daring spirit of enquiry and investigation which was exhibited in this state had not been promoted and encouraged, if the cold and inanimate expression of disapprobation which other parts of the country adopted, had been practiced in this, perhaps we might now be sinking in despondency, or at best, be groping our way to commercial and political distinction, with infantine exertion.

The nature and propriety of the opinions we have invariably maintained, as they were never the result of any party co-operation or advice, might perhaps sometimes deviate from the general sentiments of contemporary politicians of the same class.—The shades of difference, which may be found to exist, will not be fairly produced as a contradiction to federal opinions, or as a wilful opposition to prevailing sentiments. What we have written we have written; and we shall not shrink from the most scrutinizing investigation of the integrity of remark by which we have always been animated. Thus, we have held that the claims of Great-Britain, in what is called the rule of war of '56, but more especially the doctrines set up by the Orders in Council, are intrinsically unsound in principle, and flagrantly unjust

in practice. But that the American embargo was not a measure in the least calculated to enforce our rights in respect to that subject, by any appeals which could be made by means of it, to the interests of Great Britain, was a doctrine in our opinion equally true and conclusive, from various chains of argument. To the right of searching neutral merchant vessels, as claimed by Great Britain, we have paid considerable attention, and have maintained that the doctrine heretofore held by Mr. Madison is unsound. We do not deny the conduct of the British officers to be oppressive and frequently outrageous ; but we have asserted that a practical rule, which shall exempt Americans from impressment, is the only remedy on which we ought to insist ; for right is clearly on the side of Great Britain.

The most unfortunate affair of the Chesapeak was a subject on which Mr. Jefferson contributed to involve the country in peculiar difficulty. Not for the proclamation against British vessels of war, for that was unavoidable ; he could not do less to gratify the exasperated malice of the populace, and he could not do more if he had been inclined, for the warlike power of the United States was inadequate to enforce any orders or directions which the British squadron had refused to obey. The difficulties connected with that attack, which have it is to be hoped been brought to a final determination, were in our negociation with Great Britain, in regard to the reparation for the wrong. It is well understood that many of the claims of Mr. Jefferson's administration, in negociating a treaty of commerce, were never acceded to by the British ministry ; particularly on the question of impressments from American merchant vessels. The attack upon the American frigate, was supposed to afford an opportunity for enforcing our old claims of the immunity of the flag in merchant ships too favourable to be omitted. Accordingly our minister at the court of St. James was required to demand, as an item in the amount of reparation acknowledged by Great Britain to be due, the concession of the general principle of exemption. Now, as the demand included, in its very nature, an unattainable concession, which could not be granted to us without manifest injustice to herself on the part of Great Britain ; and as it never should have been required, as a recompence for an aggression which did not involve the principle in question, so we have always opposed the administration for mingling the unjust

demand of the universal exemption of our flag from search, with the equitable one of specifick reparation for the Chesapeak disaster. With equal propriety might an individual who had been personally insulted, demand besides the customary acknowledgment of impropriety, from the guilty party, that he should give him his house, or confer upon him any other part of his property.

There never has been a period in our national existence which has marked the United States with so obvious a connection with contemporary history of mankind, and which has so much involved the immediate prosperity and future destiny of the country, as the previous year. And whilst events abroad have conspired to render us the only neutral power upon earth, of conspicuous consequence, and have rendered our weight in the scale of hostility of main consideration as to its ultimate vibration, the conduct of our rulers at home have marked our national character with a disgrace the more indelible, as the figure which we unfolded to the world was so evidently exposed. The president of the country, the theme of ridicule for his philosophick notions of government, to say no worse; his leaders in congress repeatedly making ridiculous laws, which they could not enforce; and in order to inforce them forming another, which nearly exciting rebellion, they were obliged immediately to repeal; laws, indeed, the baneful operation of which was felt by ourselves rather than our enemies, are circumstances which afford a faint outline of the appearance and conduct of our rulers at Washington. By some unaccountable fatality of opinion however, these men were supported by their party by a perversity of errour and multiplication of falsehood without a precedent in the records of party animosity. We have accordingly frequently resorted to the task of refuting the calumnies, misrepresentations, and falsehoods which were industriously circulated through the community in democratick papers. So much for our political opinions; which have been generally confined to a few predominant topicks which were obviously the most important to the community, whilst incidental assertions, the common theme of newspaper controversy, have been left to those who imagine that a decision of questions of a secondary nature, have any material effect on those of national magnitude.

Originally it was intended that a department of this paper should have been devoted to ridicule the enthusiastick disturbers

of religious tranquillity, who under the garb of fanaticism, wander about the country and contribute to overturn some of the best principles of social order and domestick happiness. It was also intended rigorously to attack the virulence of certain schismaticks, who pretend to maintain exclusive doctrines of salvation, and whose property and talents are devoted to the diffusion of religious intolerance and the imposition of apeculiar system of belief. But although nothing is more frequent or successful in Europe than satire so directed, it is found to create here, such excessive irritation, that these subjects have only been occasionally treated; and then not with the severity of which they are so evidently susceptible. Moliere produced a wonderful effect upon the French stage in his exposure of the religious hypocrite. The Non Juror of C. Cibber, which is a free translation of the drama of the celebrated French writer, afterward gained great success in England. The play is now performed under the little of The Hypocrite, as better adapted to the English stage, by Arthur Murphy, and we think it deserves the attention of our performers. The state of society fairly demands a publick exposition of the consummate hypocrisy, and secret vices of many of these holy impostors and pretenders to religious sanctity The system of rational piety excludes all this vehemence of fanatick exclamation, this intolerance of opinion, which is so generally and fatally diffused in the New England States. It contains more reason, and less fanaticism; more charity, and less violence; more active beneficence, and less outward show.

The general design of our poetical department has been to deride any popular absurdities or follies which the literature of the times has presented to our view. Contributing to the original intention of the publication, it has been most frequently employed in ridiculing literary, rather than political or religious errours. We have been obliged, however, to resort to foreign alliances, to accomplish our contemplated intentions; America is a climate unpropitious to the diffusion of poetick inspiration, and we have called in vain upon the superintending divinity to bestow upon us a portion of his powers. We have indeed been induced to hope much from promises largely advanced; but have realized little from kindnesses conferred. Yet we are not without belief, that this branch of our paper, if properly understood and candidly examined, will be found to contain foreign

selections, which might become essentially useful in correcting some erroneous prevailing notions in regard to literary excellence.

The animosity which satirical compositions excite in all small communities, is the unavoidable consequence of the universal interest which the whole society seems to take in the object of the application. All persons, eminent either for their folly or their wisdom, have a pretty general acquaintance with all classes of people, and when a satire appears, there immediately arises a community of feeling for the person against whose peculiarities of errour or vice the shafts are directed, and all his acquaintances are ready to supply him with a shield. Whatever of satire therefore, which the Ordeal contains, has rather applied to personages of 'scale and office,' than to individuals who, however they might have deserved, have found protection in insignificance. The democratick party, as such, we have considered a legitimate object of attack, and the leaders of consequence have come in for their proportional share of its fury. But our acerbity, however caustick, and our censure, however vindictive, has always been dictated by an impression of the propriety of the application, and not from any feelings of personal animosity or irritation.

But we have no design to gratify vice or folly by any appearances of lamentation for their sufferings; nor to gain the regard of those whose good opinion it would be no advantage to obtain, and highly censurable to solicit.

In considering fairly the whole volume now presented to the publick, all reasonable allowances should be made for the editors in regard to the diversity of topicks which they have been obliged for the sake of variety to discuss, to the quantity of matter which they have weekly been obliged to supply, and to the peremptory calls for publication, which, as Dr. Johnson remarks, are so frequently made 'upon an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, an imagination overwhelmed,' and an invention languishing under the pressure of previous labours. There are many paragraphs inserted, which in their more leisure moments the editors would gladly have expunged, and many inaccuracies of expression and anomalies of thought, which they cannot review with complete satisfaction. Matters merely secondary have sometimes been unnecessarily extended, and the discussion of topicks of predominant interest have occasionally been censurably

abridged, or carelessly composed. Under such impressions the editors dismiss the work, under a full persuasion that they have faithfully performed their contract with the publick, and if they do not deserve the praise due to industry and talents, they may claim the reward to which he is fairly entitled, who with pure motives and intentions, exposes the hypocrisy, laughs at the follies, and assails the corruption of the times.

MILITARY.

THE skill and discipline of troops, modelled upon the modern system of tacticks which has rendered the French name so eminent, and their arms victorious, has in no particular, it is said, been more eminently successful, than in applying the principle of the oblique line of battle to large bodies of soldiers, than any other nation had ever before adopted. The hint was first adopted in practice by Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, but Napoleon has not only extended the principle but has combined it with other parts of the new system, which has made his armies almost irresistible. The following abservations from 'Military Memoirs, Ancient and Modern, by Dr. Thompson,' well explains the nature and design of this order of government, and we presume will not be destitute of amusement to those of our readers, who relish military disquisitions.

"All arrangements of troops, in line of battle, are either *direct*, that is to say parallel, or nearly so, to the front of the enemy's line; or *oblique*, that is, inclined to his front; so that if the two lines were to meet at either extremity they would form an angle more or less acute.

1st. The direct order of battle is the most natural and obvious, the most simple in its disposition and operations, and the most ancient. In proportion, however, as the art of tacticks was improved, many important defects were discovered in the direct order: but the principal reason why it is seldom employed seems to be the difficulty of meeting with, in a campaign, a plain so level and so extensive, as to allow two considerable armies to be drawn up, in opposite lines, the one parallel to the other, and to manœuvre, close, and engage along their whole front at the same time.

Direct or parallel lines of battle must, besides, be very disadvantageous for any army, unless the front be but of very small extent, and that the commander have a sufficient number of troops, in reserve, to reinforce such parts of his line as the enemy appear to break through.

The oblique order of battle comprehends every species of disposition of troops, by which they can, at pleasure, be made to act against one or more points of the enemy's line, whilst the remaining parts of it are kept in check; such troops as are not engaged in these attacks, being held back, and beyond the reach of the enemy; by which operation the attacking army seems, in a general sense, to be obliquely inclined, by one or more angles, to that of the enemy.

This oblique order is the most scientifick, the most artful, and the most perfect of all. 'It is this,' says the Chevalier de Folard, 'against which a general, however able he may be, can form no opposition, when it is suddenly presented by the enemy: for, to be able to oppose it with due effect, it would be necessary to execute such manœuvres as cannot possibly be performed in the moment of action, as they require much time and previous arrangement. It might, for instance, be requisite to transport the whole left of an army to the right, or the whole right to the left.'

The parts of a line, with which the partial attack or attacks are to be made, are reinforced beyond the ordinary strength of the line, and the other parts not engaged, are weakened in proportion as they are removed from the enemy.

The oblique order is the genuine resource of a weak army. Its principal advantage consists in giving a commander the choice of the point of attack, and in rendering for some time, at least, the enemy's superiority in numbers of no use to them.

An army which is forced to engage another much more numerous, ought, above all to endeavour to outfront it on one of the wings, and to be strong on every point where the enemy may make an attack. By gaining these two grand advantages, and by keeping back the other parts of the line from action, a sort of equality, in effective strength, will be established between the two armies, the greater portion of the largest being thus rendered of no use in the battle.

Frederick II. or the Great, of Prussia, has of all the moderns, best studied the principles and properties of the oblique order. In his grand encampments and reviews, in time of peace, he shewed the mechanism of this order to his generals; and it was by it that he opened the way to his numerous victories. The Prussian tacticks form an æra in military history.

The oblique order may be employed against the right, the left, or the centre of the enemy's line, or against any of the intermediate points; but it is generally directed against one of the wings.

The great art of arranging this order, is to mask and conceal the design from the enemy, who being equally apprehensive of an attack on every point, cannot weaken one in order to strengthen any other.

The way to make an oblique attack miscarry, is to adopt an order contrary to that of the enemy, and to have always a considerable *corps de reserve*, of horse and foot, ready to reinforce the point attacked.

It is often of great advantage to employ the oblique order against an enemy, who has taken what he considers to be a good position, and there waits for the attack. In such a case he has no fears of being surprized, and for that very confidence is frequently defeated.

However inferiour a general may be, he never can be utterly defeated, if he act on the oblique order: for, as he does not engage the whole front of the enemy, nor even bring into action but a part of his own line, he can never suffer, excepting merely in the point of contact.

It follows from all this, that a general, who is obliged to engage an enemy superiour to himself in numbers, or in the quality of the troops, ought to take such a position as that the enemy cannot attack his whole front at one time. By such a position he will be saved from a total defeat; but, on the other hand, he will be prevented from employing his talents, or taking advantage of circumstances, to ruin the enemy, unless this last destroy his own army, by repeated and unsuccessful assaults on such parts as are within his reach."

MR. MADISON.

THE late happy negociation to accommodate our differences with Great Britain which we ardently hope may terminate in that country as successful as they have begun in this, has placed such a weight of popularity in the hands of Mr. Madison, that all the fear of his continuing in the presidency will be found in the probable desertion of his own party. Indications of mistrust have already been made, and if the president continues in the path of honour and integrity without vaulting or tottering or wavering, we confess we have some fears for his reputation amongst the democrats. But if the conduct of Napoleon when the accommodation with England shall have been communicated to him, shall appear to be hostile, we expect to hear Great Britain denounced in the utmost vehemence of fury, and if Mr. Madison should dare to speak boldly as he ought to speak to the French emperour, he will be assailed by his former supporters first with artful insinuations and then with open invective. The probable conduct of France at this critical juncture deserves the peculiar solicitude of politicians.

THE WORKS OF MR. AMES AGAIN.

THE allusions in the Patriot newspaper of last Wednesday, which were considered by the editor of the Ordeal as personally obnoxious, will have been removed by the writer of that paragraph in the paper of this day. The communication as far as regards the rest of the topicks which it involves, is still a subject of animadversion. In the first place, the remarks introductory to an extract from the 'Dangers of American Liberty,' by Mr. Ames were not intended as a reply to the Review to which they allude. But if the editor of the Ordeal has not undertaken that reply, it is not from any alterations of his impressions in respect to the *motives* of the writer; or in regard to the weakness of the ground which the reviewer has assumed. We have perused the review in question, and consider the integrity of Mr. Ames's political character in no degree affected by it; it needs no defence.

"The blood of Douglass will protect itself."

As to the accusation ‘ of indirect personal virulence against the supposed author of the review,’ it may very fairly be remarked that the writer in the Patriot has discovered some general expressions highly derogatory to any individual to whose character they correspond, and has applied them to the supposed author of the review. We cannot be responsible for such an application; the author of the review must be obliged to the writer the Patriot, for the garb in which he chooses to array him. We learn from the same source, that ‘ the game, at which our pointless arrows’ are directed, ‘ are above our reach,’ which certainly could not be concluded from a perusal of the review. It could not be imagined that that composition came from any one who was not evidently open to censure and animadversion, from the meanest as well as the most exalted minds. As our editorial labours are now at an end, we shall not deem it requisite to reply to any animadversions which the present paragraph may produce.